

Details—a chance for growth, new ways to work together

by Dave Christy

Western has always been joined at the generator with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. Now, with increased demands on water resources and changes in the electric

industry, the agencies are taking another look at ways to work together.

In Western's Sierra Nevada Region, Tom Dang, a power resource engineer in Reclamation's Central Valley Project Operations Office, recently completed a two-week detail in SN's Power Marketing group. Similarly, **John Johannis**, a hydraulics engineer from SN Power Marketing, was detailed to Reclamation's Power

Operations and Maintenance Division in the Central Valley Project Operations Office for two weeks in early January.

A lesson in balancing needs

The detail enhanced Dang's understanding of power marketing functions, specifically Western's current marketing operations. "I've committed to do a few things to help Western," he said. At Reclamation, Dang works on power system computer modeling, preparing power forecasts and power operation studies and assessing how changes in CVP operations affect generation.

The CVP is a multi-purpose project, and water releases must be managed to meet various project objectives such as flood control, water quality and in-stream flows for fish. "Within those constraints, we always try to optimize the (hydropower) value," he said. Power prices can change significantly over the course of the day from peak to non-peak hours, so Reclamation's water operations affect the value of the power generated to Western's customers. On Aug. 27, 1999, for example, the average peak price was \$57.10 per MWh and the average off-peak price was \$27.66.

Although Dang was aware of the issues facing Western and its customers, the two weeks working with Western employees and attending customer meetings helped him understand their concerns in more detail. As part of both agencies' goal to maximize

(See next page)



Taking control of your career

In addition to staffing details, there are other ways to expand your personal understanding of the issues facing Western, Reclamation and the West. Here are two ways to increase your historical perspectives of the two agencies. First, read "Hoover Dam: An American Adventure," by Joseph E. Stevens. You may be surprised to find this historical documentary of Hoover Dam's construction riveting, hilarious and, in places, heart breaking.

Or, you can check out the Public Broadcasting System's four-part "Cadillac Desert" video series. It examines the history of water projects in the West, both the good and the not so-good aspects. Even if you do not agree with all the opinions expressed, it's a good idea to know about them. A copy of the series is on file in you HR office.

Both are suggested readings for Western's Management Succession Plan.

Western and Reclamation hope to continue exchanging staff to provide a better understanding of the issues each agency faces and to allow for closer cooperation.

CVP generation and revenues within project water operations, he said Reclamation will strive to provide Western staff with new data, which he believes will help Western with its excess capacity sales program and avert some undesirable energy purchases.

Reclamation also will provide Western two forecasts—one with losses based on metered data and one with losses based on the Pacific Gas & Electric Company integration contract. Reclamation will send weekly updates to Western staff on changes in the monthly forecast such as unit outages, generation and project-use and energy and capacity available for marketing. “We’ll update Western on any deviations or changes from the forecast,” he said.

Gaining a new perspective

Johannis’s detail to Reclamation’s Power O&M group allowed him to see the many challenges facing Reclamation. While he worked for Reclamation (including working in the Water Operations Division) before starting with Western last year, Johannis



Tom Dang found his detail to Western a challenging eye-opener.

The CVP is a multi-purpose project, and water releases must be managed to meet various project objectives such as flood control, water quality and in-stream flows for fish.

—Tom Dang

said, “I hadn’t been exposed to some of the daily issues facing Reclamation’s Power O&M.”

During his detail, Johannis participated in discussions with the state of California over scheduling on pumping units at San Luis Pump/Generating Plant (San Luis is jointly owned by Reclamation and the state of California and is operated by the state). He also participated in a meeting of the Power Customer Operations and Maintenance funding group. This group provides direct funding for maintenance related to CVP power facilities and helps accelerate needed maintenance that may not be accomplished in as timely a manner if only appropriated funds are used.

Western and Reclamation hope to continue exchanging staff to provide a better understanding of the issues each agency faces and to allow for closer cooperation. The staffing exchanges also broaden employee horizons, providing both agencies with better-qualified workforces.

(Note: Christy public affairs specialist in SN.)



John Johannis was able to get a better “water-side” picture of the hydropower industry during his detail with the Bureau of Reclamation.

“I hadn’t been exposed to some of the daily issues facing Reclamation’s Power O&M.”

—John Johannis